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New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 52 and 54 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354)

Mr. Baduri (Eritrea): I should like at the outset to join previous speakers in expressing sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his four special reports on the issues under discussion (A/59/CRP.3 to CRP.6).

The people of Eritrea, whose long association with the United Nations before independence was not, to say the least, a happy one, and whose memories of resolution 390 (V) — which illegitimately federated their country with Ethiopia — are agonizing, nevertheless welcome the decision to reform, revitalize and strengthen the United Nations system, especially the General Assembly. It should be recalled that it was not the Security Council, but the General Assembly, which, on the basis of Article 10 of the Charter, gave the United Nations stamp of approval to the ill-fated federation, on the basis that it was exercising a rightful decision-making power provided for by the Charter. It was one of the first decisions — if not actually the first decision — made by the General Assembly. The Assembly exercised that power because some in the Security Council recognized that any similar resolution in the Council would be threatened by a veto. That is the irony of history.

That, however, is history. The United Nations is the only Organization whose continued existence — albeit with some necessary changes — has been considered indispensable to meet the challenges of the new world order of globalization. It is noteworthy that the heads of State or Government, who met at the Millennium Summit, decided to reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and to enable it to play that role effectively.

It is also to be recalled that a preponderant number of States have, during previous annual sessions of the General Assembly, voiced strong support for the expeditious revitalization of the General Assembly, although a couple of decades ago it was being ridiculed and dismissed as an effete, ineffective and irresponsible debating society. Needless to say, Eritreans warily accept and welcome the change in attitudes — believing that it is a reflection of the times — but fervently hope that no other people will be punished by anything similar to resolution 390 (V).

Having said that, the Eritrean delegation wishes to endorse the recommendations incorporated into the statement by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, we wish to make the following observations.

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First, the need for reform and strengthening of the United Nations system, particularly the revitalization of the General Assembly, stems from the recognition that, during the first 50 years of its existence — that is, the era of the cold war — there was a steady erosion of its powers, a decline in its prestige and an increase in its marginalization by the powerful States and their allies. As a result, there was a loss of trust and confidence — and there was even cynicism — on the part of its other Members. The end of the cold war, the advent of the era of globalization and the ensuing convergence of interests — even when it was minimal — among the erstwhile antagonists created a salubrious environment of cooperation and encouraged reassessment of the United Nations.

Secondly, the revitalization of the General Assembly cannot be successfully effected without corresponding reform in the principal organs of the United Nations — including the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat — and in allied institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as in the relationship between the United Nations and other international and regional organizations. In that connection, the Eritrean delegation welcomes the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons, whose mandate was to undertake a comprehensive review of the balance and effectiveness of the major organs and institutions of the United Nations system.

Thirdly, any reform effort must, of course, be in consonance with the purposes and objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and the numerous declarations and programmes of action of the major United Nations conferences that were held during the last years of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century and which defined and enunciated the new concepts, values, norms and principles that must guide humanity and govern future international relations in the new international order.

Fourthly, economic and social development — broadly defined as the satisfaction of the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian needs of humanity and specified in Chapter IX of the Charter as original principles of the United Nations — must be given equal prominence as security issues. Freedom from want and freedom from fear must be regarded as equally important. Indeed, the definition of security now encompasses the former as well as the latter. In that connection, institutional restructuring of the Organization's social and economic sectors becomes appropriate. Eritrea supports the efforts made to consolidate the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and to enable it to acquire a strategic planning capacity.

Fifthly, Eritrea endorses the proposal, made by the previous President, Mr. Julian Hunte, to consider the issue of the strengthening the General Assembly in two clusters, one dealing with the enhancement of the role of the General Assembly on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Charter, and the other, with the working methods of the Assembly. However, both clusters must be addressed in tandem, because success in one area without any achievements in the other would be meaningless.

The reform and strengthening of the United Nations — particularly the revitalization of the General Assembly — is viewed by many as a matter of urgent priority. The momentum that has been triggered must be sustained. Yet it must be recognized that the desired change cannot be achieved without the required political commitment. If there is to be success, commitment must be genuine and must be translated into concrete action.

Mr. Dhakal (Nepal): At the outset, let me warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I assure you of our cooperation to make that session a successful one. My delegation joins others in expressing its appreciation to the former President of the Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, for his commitment to advancing the work of revitalizing the General Assembly during his term. We also express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his relentless efforts to move United Nations reform forward and for his report (A/59/354) submitted to the Assembly.

My delegation attaches great importance to the work of strengthening of the United Nations and revitalizing the General Assembly. I commend you, Mr. President, for the commitment you have shown to carry forward the agenda of United Nations reform, including the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. My

delegation wishes to make a few observations on the extremely important issue before us.

Nepal firmly believes that the efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly should focus mainly on addressing the burning issues that the world faces today, such as terrorism, poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and diseases such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis. The United Nations is undertaking efforts aimed at achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, and next year's high-level event will be an important step in revealing the progress made on those goals.

Nepal believes that all work of the United Nations should embody the fundamental objectives set out in its Charter. Nepal has always supported efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations and making its activities more effective and results-oriented. Nepal expressed its position on issues on the agenda during the debate last year. My delegation reiterates its position on those issues in view of its relevance to the work of the General Assembly.

There is no denying that the United Nations requires more efficiency and effectiveness to carry out its tasks. Past efforts have made some progress in that direction. Two resolutions — resolution 58/126 and resolution 58/316 — adopted by the General Assembly have been important steps aimed at charting out a framework for revitalizing the Assembly. Nepal made contributions to those resolutions by actively participating in the negotiations. We continue to support their objectives of enhancing the authority and the role of the General Assembly and improving its efficiency and effectiveness. As envisaged by the resolutions, this year the General Assembly elected its Vice-Presidents and the Bureaux of its Main Committees well before the opening of the session. That process needs to be institutionalized in future as well, to assure a smooth transition of the Bureaux of those bodies. Some changes have also taken place in the working methods of the intergovernmental bodies, such as the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the latter's functional Commissions.

We have witnessed some procedural reforms, for example the biennialization, triennialization and clustering of agenda items. Reducing time for the general debate and eliminating conference services after hours, have also helped in utilizing resources in a disciplined and efficient manner. Such reforms have certainly been useful for reducing costs and increasing efficiency, but, by themselves, they are not sufficient to make the United Nations more effective in terms of its outputs and results.

We have also noted that the changes have remained procedural in nature, while substantive reforms have been lacking. There is a need for determined efforts to provide the United Nations with the ability to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. We need bold initiatives to make substantive change as well, and to vigorously shape the United Nations into an Organization that has the vision, the means and the tools to address the problems of a new world.

Nepal is committed to working with those who are determined to put the United Nations at the centre of multilateralism and to take bold reform initiatives to revive the Organization. At this juncture, reforms must be bolder in approach and more innovative in content. They must be comprehensive and coherent as well as substantive and doable. This debate affords us the opportunity to elaborate such needed reforms.

We therefore need to take a series of steps for procedural and structural reorganization and revitalization. Last year, my delegation made some suggestions that were described with the acronym "CAMSSIB" — cluster and consolidate the agenda; adapt the agenda to the emerging needs; merge and reorganize the committees and subcommittees; strengthen the Office of the Assembly President; stagger the work of the General Assembly throughout the session; implement the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly; and bring budget allocation into conformity with priorities.

Nepal reiterates its view that strengthening the Office of the President has received short shrift so far. We must reinforce the Office to make it more visible in structure, more respectable in stature and more substantive in content. The President should have the capacity and resources to do his task effectively, particularly in following up the resolutions of the General Assembly.

Effective implementation of the resolutions on a selective basis would enhance the primacy of the United Nations system. Today it is inconceivable to implement the nearly 300 resolutions that are turned out each year. Only the existence of concrete results of

the work of the General Assembly will create a strong constituency among people around the world, and strengthen the most representative body of the United Nations. We support efforts to link the budget with the priorities of the United Nations. We also underline the imperative to strike a balance between the requirement for legislative control and the need for administrative flexibility in order to optimize the results of United Nations activities.

Nepal supported the appointment by the Secretary-General of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, under the leadership of the former President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso. My delegation thanks the Panel for its hard work and its comprehensive report containing valuable suggestions for improving meaningful relationships between the world body and civil society. We consider that improving such relationships is also part of United Nations reform. Establishment of a special fund to enhance the civil society of the South would certainly facilitate their participation in the work of the United Nations.

Participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from developing countries is small, when compared to NGO participation from developed countries, and the former should therefore be increased. My delegation, however, supports the view that efforts towards increased participation of civil society should not change the intergovernmental nature of the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations.

We consider that the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations deserves serious and careful consideration by the Assembly.

Lastly, the international community has the obligation to make the world a more peaceful, prosperous and just place for all. It has recognized that imperative in a number of global compacts, including the Millennium Declaration.

Nepal is pleased to engage itself in reforming the United Nations and in helping the Organization to win the minds and hearts of ordinary people around the world. We believe it will help to formally establish the United Nations within a global public consensus. For this, the world body must focus on implementing its resolutions and decisions by bridging the gap between its words and its deeds.

Mrs. Núñez de Odreman (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of Hugo Chávez Frías and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I wish to pay tribute to the President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly and wish him every success in his leadership during the session.

I also take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation for the endeavours and accomplishments of your predecessor, Foreign Minister Julian Hunte, who, by giving priority to the topics now before us — revitalization of the General Assembly and strengthening of the United Nations system — stimulated significant progress which should enable the Organization to become a more effective body for resolving the major problems of humankind.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Ambassador of Brazil, on behalf of the Rio Group, in his capacity as Secretary pro tempore. We wish also to reaffirm the support and cooperation of our country in this very important mission of achieving our objectives efficiently.

It is vital that there be change in the United Nations. We must make its political arenas available on an equal footing; revitalize the General Assembly as a democratic, deliberative and policy-making body at the highest level in the Organization; develop the role of the Economic and Social Council as an instrument for devising development programmes designed to combat poverty; and together exert our efforts to democratize the Security Council. Those changes will lead to greater representation and institutional balance and will promote a social agenda.

Such change is even more imperative if we bear in mind the increase in the number of Member States of the Organization in recent times. In fact, today it is plain to see how little equity there is in the constitution of the principal organs of the United Nations; in particular, in the case of the Security Council, the current structure is unrepresentative. For Venezuela, as the Assembly knows, the idea of the reform of the Security Council means making profound and radical changes which necessarily includes eliminating the right of veto.

We have carefully read the report of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, which notes the need to expand and

deepen relations with non-governmental organizations. This may facilitate intergovernmental debates within the United Nations on questions of global importance.

Based on the proposals made by the Panel in its report, a number of suggestions were made for the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in intergovernmental bodies. Venezuela will continue to study those proposals, which are designed to strengthen the participation of civil society through NGOs, with the understanding that within the United Nations, Member States alone have jurisdiction to take decisions, and that Governments are the interlocutors as regards relations between the United Nations and its Member States. Moreover, our country has not had the most happiest experience with non-governmental organizations operating in the Americas, since those that are controlled from the outside have been part of an imperial and transnational plan to destabilize our institutions in recent years.

Venezuela acknowledges that the United Nations must reach out in order to consolidate its coordinating function worldwide in the consideration of the various issues of interest to the international community. That openness and interaction, however, must be the subject of more careful study so that we can assess their range of potential consequences.

Venezuela supports and will work to promote all initiatives to strengthen the role of the United Nations and respect for and observance of the principles of its constitutive Charter. International security issues are fundamental and must be productively debated in this arena, eschewing rhetoric, so as to address the root causes of the dangers — that is, the real origins of the threats to security. We have a broad and holistic vision of international security based on humanistic and multidimensional criteria that combine social, environmental, economic, cultural and military factors. Only such an integrated approach will allow us correctly to apply the norms that the United Nations has developed to safeguard the rights and fundamental freedoms of humankind.

War and conflict can be avoided if people enjoy security, manifested in adequate nutrition, health care, education, housing and leisure. If those factors were guaranteed, the Security Council would become unnecessary. Prioritizing all those objectives would allow us to revitalize the Assembly and to strengthen the entire United Nations system, which is necessary if we are to meet the new challenges posed by current international circumstances.

Ms. Enkhtsetseg (Mongolia): My delegation welcomes the combined discussion of the two important issues of strengthening the United Nations system and revitalizating the General Assembly, the first agenda items to be debated following the general debate, where the majority of world leaders reaffirmed anew their determination to speed up the reform of the world Organization so that it can effectively meet the emerging threats and challenges of the new millennium.

We share the view that the Secretary-General's report, in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, and the Cardoso report itself give us much food for thought as we move on with the reform of the United Nations.

My delegation also wishes to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her lucid introduction of the agenda items before us.

Mongolia shares the conclusion of the Secretary-General that expanding and deepening the Organization's relationship with civil society will further strengthen the United Nations and enhance the quality and depth of policy analysis for the intergovernmental debates on issues of global importance. We welcome the major thrust of the Cardoso report on the need to make the world Organization a more outward-looking institution, which would help to connect the global with the local. In pursuing those objectives, indeed, an effective multi-stakeholder partnership has to be developed.

However, as to the specific modalities of engaging with civil society and the other pertinent recommendations put forward in the Secretary-General's report, the views expressed so far by the Member States suggest that further consideration and discussion are needed, while bearing in mind the undisputed intergovernmental character of the world Organization.

The issue of strengthening the United Nations system is a multifaceted task encompassing, inter alia, the restructuring, reform and revitalization of its principal organs, as well as the streamlining of the Secretariat. Among those, no doubt, the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security

Council are top priorities. On the reform of the Security Council, my delegation will make a separate statement, as we come to discuss the agenda item on that issue in the plenary.

In moving the reform process forward, all countries ought actively to participate and to display genuine political commitment and determination, as we believe that the United Nations can be made as effective as we, the Member States, want it to be. In that regard, Mongolia is eagerly awaiting the High-level Panel's report on threats, challenges and change and ensuing recommendations by the Secretary-General, so that we can collectively engage in moving reform forward by taking bold steps as we commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations next year.

On the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, my delegation shares the view that the General Assembly ought to regain its central role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations. That should be the main objective of the ongoing revitalization process, to which Mongolia has been and remains fully committed.

We highly commend the work carried out by the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, and his facilitators to revitalize the General Assembly. The two resolutions — 58/126 and 58/316 — adopted under his skilful leadership have proved to be by far the most far-reaching actions in more than a decade. They have laid the tangible groundwork for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the General Assembly. Significant as they are, we should nevertheless aim higher and work with vigour to further enhance the role and authority of the General Assembly by undertaking truly innovative approaches in the months ahead.

We share the view that the recently introduced practice of holding periodic meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the measures designed to strengthen the Office of the President and the institutional development of the General Committee, are all important beginnings in enhancing the role of the General Assembly.

Furthermore, the periodic submission of specific subject-oriented reports by the Security Council to the General Assembly on issues of current international concern; increased interactive debates; better conceptualization of the contents of the agenda of the General Assembly, including through the clustering, biennialization, triennialization and elimination of items; the reduction of the heavy volume of documentation; and the drafting and adoption of concise, focused and action-oriented resolutions will help to further advance the ongoing process of improving the working methods of the General Assembly.

In that regard, we welcome the fact that the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly has been divided into nine headings, corresponding to the priorities of the Organization, with a view to achieving a better presentation of the issues and challenges faced by the Assembly and to making its work more accessible, in pursuance of resolution 58/316. However, we also believe that no rationalization effort should in any way diminish the importance of development issues on the agenda, as they pertain to the economic and social well-being of peoples, on whose very behalf the Organization was founded.

Over the last decade, the General Assembly, through the adoption of its resolutions, has outlined specific measures aimed at rationalizing its working methods and improving its efficiency. All in all, those measures put more emphasis on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly and on improving its working methods. Although they have had a positive bearing on the functioning of the General Assembly, we believe that there is still ample room for further improvement to be made to the substantive aspects of the revitalization of the General Assembly — that is, enhancing its role and authority.

In that respect, my delegation is of the view that innovative approaches need to be further explored in order better to monitor the follow-up of the resolutions of the General Assembly and, most importantly, to ensure their implementation by Member States. Some thoughts and suggestions in that regard have already been aired by previous speakers that we believe merit further discussion and deliberation in the months ahead.

We also look forward in that regard to the Secretary-General's report on all aspects of the implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth

session. My delegation trusts that it will provide us with actionable recommendations to further revitalize the General Assembly.

In conclusion, let me say that we believe in your leadership, Sir, and trust that you will successfully guide us to work collectively towards making the world Organization better equipped to serve the needs of its Member States and to effectively meet the formidable challenges of today's world. In so doing, you can fully count on my delegation's unreserved support and collaboration.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): Nigeria welcomes the opportunity to take part in this joint debate. I wish to express the appreciation of the delegation of Nigeria to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his initiatives and efforts at strengthening the United Nations. Those efforts are in conformity with resolution 58/316 and the declarations of the Millennium Summit, at which world leaders pledged to invigorate the United Nations and to make it more effective in the promotion of world peace and sustainable development. We also pay special tribute to Mr. Julian Hunte, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, for his outstanding work, particularly on the revitalization of the General Assembly. Nigeria also aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the agenda item before us.

The United Nations has made significant progress in the area of peace and security in the last couple of years as a result of its increasingly proactive role in the resolution of persistent and emerging global challenges. That has greatly enhanced the image of the Organization in the international community. Consequently, the peoples of the world and the international community now expect a lot from the United Nations. The reorganization and enhancement of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, following the implementation of the Brahimi Panel report, have resulted in the improvement of the capacities of the United Nations in the discharge of its obligations in the maintenance of international peace and security. As a result, the Organization can more effectively deploy and manage complex peacekeeping and peace-building operations.

In that regard, we commend the United Nations efforts in peacekeeping and peace-building in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. We reaffirm our support for the introduction of the rule of law, gender mainstreaming and a multidimensional approach to peacekeeping operations now adopted by the United Nations.

Nigeria commends the United Nations commitment to the eradication of poverty, hunger, malnutrition and diseases, especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis. To build on those modest achievements, we call on the United Nations to assist developing countries to achieve the ideals of sustainable development, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Monterrey Consensus. We also call on the United Nations and the international community to show the same commitment they have demonstrated in the area of peace and security in addressing social and economic issues in developing countries. In that regard, the United Nations should explore avenues for resolving the crippling debt burden on developing countries, since the international community can no longer afford a situation in which more than two thirds of its membership are incapacitated by the weight of external debt.

The linkage between peace and security, on the one hand, and poverty eradication and economic development on the other should be reflected in policy strategies and approaches of the United Nations on those issues. The capacity of the United Nations in those areas should be strengthened with the deployment of the requisite resources for assistance to developing countries.

The United Nations is playing a commendable role in building strong partnerships for conflict resolution and development. In that regard, Nigeria welcomes the partnership between the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, and non-State actors, such as civil society organizations, interest groups, universities and the like.

We welcome the increasing participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in intergovernmental bodies. In that regard, it is gratifying to note that the General Assembly and the Main Committees continue to involve the NGOs in their deliberations, meetings and panel discussions. We hope that that healthy development will be sustained in the interests and benefit of all. We therefore endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation and

suggestion on the increase in the participation of NGOs, particularly on improving the involvement of NGOs from developing countries as well as strengthening the institutional capacity of the United Nations for engagement with the NGOs.

Nigeria supports the revitalization of the General Assembly to enable it to discharge its responsibilities more effectively, as outlined in the Charter. That would also enhance its capacity to respond promptly and decisively to global threats and challenges. We reiterate our support for those measures already taken by Member States to reform the General Assembly. We are all beneficiaries of the improved coordination of the work of the Assembly and the Committees and of the regular meetings between the President and Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, representatives of major groups, chairs of regional groups and representatives of the Secretary-General, with the objective of ensuring the better planning of conferences. We reaffirm our support for General Assembly resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, aimed at further revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

We note with satisfaction resolutions 58/316 and 58/317, by which the General Assembly has reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Nigeria therefore calls on Member States to demonstrate their commitment to those two and other United Nations resolutions by supporting the multilateral process and the collective decisions of the United Nations. As the most important representative legislative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly should play its central role in the pursuit of the objectives and purposes of the Organization. To that end, the General Assembly should initiate more interactive debates and discussions on critical issues of interest on social, economic, political, peace and security issues. There is a need to streamline the agenda of the plenary and to improve the working methods of the General Committee in order to enable it to play a more active role in the work of the General Assembly.

On the reform of the work of the Main Committees, Nigeria holds the view that no Committee should be singled out for reform, since the work of all the Committees is linked and interwoven. Consequently, the reform of the Main Committees should be carried out in a holistic manner.

In conclusion, Nigeria believes that the strengthening of the United Nations and the revitalization of the General Assembly are long-term issues that require time and the collective efforts and political will of Member States. We therefore reaffirm our support for the efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations and assure the Secretary-General of our continued and active participation in the process.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We wish at the outset to express the Syrian delegation's support for the statement made by the representative of brotherly Algeria yesterday on behalf of the working group of the Non-Aligned Movement on reforming the United Nations and revitalizing the work of the General Assembly.

We also wish to express our appreciation for the role played by your predecessor, Sir, in managing and leading the deliberations of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We trust that, under your leadership, the Member States will complete the progress towards revitalizing the General Assembly.

The Syrian Arab Republic has positively and actively participated in all the discussions on revitalizing the role of the General Assembly. Our delegation took part in the formulation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, the appropriate, effective and full implementation of which should be given the Assembly's due attention. We believe that the Assembly should focus on following up and monitoring those resolutions at this session.

It is worth noting in that respect that the implementation of those resolutions has indeed come a long way since the President of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees and their bureaus were elected early in this session. Those elections have undoubtedly facilitated the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and we have begun to feel their positive impact. Moreover, setting time frames for the Assembly's work facilitates the work of many delegations.

At the forthcoming discussions, our delegation will participate in the preliminary analysis of the completed phases of the revitalization process. The in-depth evaluation of those phases will enrich our discussions with a view to helping us to develop our working methods and to prepare for the comprehensive review that must be held at the sixtieth session of the

General Assembly, in accordance with resolution 58/316.

Syria reaffirms its commitment to the revitalization of the General Assembly. We believe that the philosophy of reform must be based on the fundamental principle that reforms are means of development and not a goal in themselves. The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic therefore believes that the revitalization of the General Assembly must seek to enable the Assembly to play its leading role as the most appropriate body for international deliberations and the most dependable decision-making centre. In that regard, we must focus on empowering the Assembly to play its lead role as the highest legislative authority among the principal organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, whose inflated agenda includes thematic issues that fall squarely within the purview of the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

In that context, Syria believes that one important step in the revitalization of the General Assembly's work is the search for ways and means to implement all of its resolutions. The implementation of its resolutions is one important element in promoting the Assembly's credibility and in helping it to resume its due role. The appeal to truncate those resolutions therefore has no serious place in the revitalization of the General Assembly. Rather, it aims to minimize and distort the Assembly's role by disabling an important aspect of its activities. We must therefore fully implement and activate the resolutions adopted by the Assembly and create the appropriate mechanisms for monitoring their implementation. In so doing, we will take a firm step along the path of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly and entrenching international legitimacy.

Syria is closely following the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established by the Secretary-General. The Panel is entrusted with addressing current and future threats to international peace and security, as well as the prevailing situation of the main bodies of the United Nations. It will offer recommendations for strengthening their position and role. Syria will take part in the deliberations and discussions of the Member States on the proposals and opinions to be submitted by the Panel.

In the context of strengthening the United Nations system, my delegation has read the Secretary-General's report, contained in document A/59/354, concerning the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. We note the Secretary-General's recommendations in that regard; my delegation will actively evaluate and discuss them with all other delegations, giving due consideration to the importance of maintaining the intergovernmental nature of the Organization as laid down in its Charter. Many delegations have focused on that issue in their statements in the course of this debate.

In conclusion, we have not yet completed the revitalization of the General Assembly. Progress in achieving important results in that process must be accompanied by reform of the United Nations system in general in order to make it more democratic and transparent and to guarantee adherence by all the main bodies to their mandates.

Mr. Latheef (Maldives): The United Nations was born at the right time for the right purpose on the right platform. There is no doubt that it has, over the past 58 years, performed well in achieving its objectives. However, today, the geopolitical map of the world is very different from that of 1945. The technological revolution and the globalization process have made the global village a single community demanding that the Organization make increasingly complex and far-reaching decisions. That is the backdrop against which we should approach reforms of our unique and indispensable Organization.

My delegation believes that the resolve of the international community for reforming and revitalizing the Organization has never been greater. Almost the entire membership has expressed its desire to see significant change in the way the Organization does business. No one in this Assembly will deny the relevance of reforms and all have at one time or another talked about it or expressed an idea or two on the subject. However, all too often we have seen ourselves stuck when it come to specifics. If we wish to make our reform efforts successful, then we should all be ready to exercise maximum flexibility and to demonstrate our political will to restore the credibility and legitimacy of the Organization by giving multilateralism the centre stage.

My delegation is convinced that, as a matter of principle, the General Assembly's universality justifies its playing the most central role in the Organization. Restoring and maintaining the authority of the

Assembly, therefore, is crucial if the Organization is to be effective. We believe that the various proposals to streamline and rationalize the agenda by biennializing or triennializing and clustering related agenda items would enable the Assembly to focus more on the substance of the issues.

We also believe that fashioning the decisions of the Assembly with follow-up mechanisms built into them and ensuring consensus as a decision-making tool, where appropriate, would further strengthen the effectiveness of the Assembly. In that regard, my delegation views the adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 as a major step forward. The implementation and effective follow-up of those resolutions are essential and should be given maximum priority.

The reforms implemented thus far in the economic and social sectors of the Organization are already bearing fruit. Greater transparency; the involvement of major stakeholders, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization; and closer collaboration with civil society in those fields would, in our view, enhance coordination and harmonization more effectively.

Taking advantage of the advances in information technology, in our view, can help the Organization cut costs and reduce its reliance on paper documentation. In that regard, we view the modernization of the conference facilities to be inevitable. Although the initial costs of the conversion may be high, a modern state-of-the-art conference facility would, in our view, generate savings and increase the effectiveness and capacity of the Organization to service its membership.

The Organization should be well financed, well equipped and well structured at all times. Reforms will not work unless they are backed by both financial and qualified human resources. Fulfilling our mandatory obligations of paying our assessed contributions in full and on time is therefore of vital importance. As long as the financial flow of the Organization remains shaky and unpredictable, we cannot expect it to be effective in delivering its mandates.

Change in the United Nations, created to address the needs, hopes and aspirations of a fast-changing world citizenry, is an inevitability we must all welcome. There is no doubt that the more representative the United Nations is, the more democratic it would be, and that the more accountable the United Nations is, the more efficient it would be, thus benefiting us all, small and large, weak and powerful, rich and poor.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): The issues confronting the international community are enormous and complex. New and emerging issues, including challenges and threats, are added on every year. This year, the United Nations is again inundated with a broad range of issues, ranging from hunger and poverty to security, terrorism and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The burden has indeed grown much heavier. The United Nations is at a critical juncture in its history and, indeed, at a crossroads. Therefore, the call for the reform and revitalization of the United Nations systems and structures is timely and deserves our support.

Fiji, like other small island nations, attaches great importance to the reform process and reaffirms its willingness to be involved to ensure the improvement of United Nations systems and structures so that they can ably meet the challenges placed before them by Member States and their peoples. It is heartening to note, and also to our credit, that the reform has taken place because of the timely intervention of Member States, with the support and guidance of the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the General Assembly, and not in response to external pressures.

The United Nations must continue to be responsive and evolve with the times if it is to remain worthy of its role, as enshrined in its founding documents. It must continue to be relevant to all, particularly to small developing nations like Fiji, which looks to the United Nations as a beacon of hope. The biggest challenge therefore is to ensure that the reforms bring forth a rebirth of a stronger, independent and fully democratic United Nations, one which can effectively respond to the changing world but continues to retain the values that are central to human development.

While Fiji, like others, looks forward with a lot of optimism to the outcome of the work of the High-level Panel, our interests continue to focus on development and the need to ensure that it remains high on the international community's agenda. Whilst we totally agree that international peace and security and new emerging issues are important, that should, however, not turn us from our resolve to tackle the central issue of underdevelopment. The United Nations needs to reassert itself as a key development agent wherein the

formulation and implementation of important social and economic development decisions are made.

On the issue of expanding United Nations-civil society relations, the report of the Secretary-General and the Panel of Eminent Persons provide some direction on effective partnership and relations in that area. My delegation is studying the two reports, but generally we believe that the ideas and recommendations expressed in them need more digestion and consultation before any substantive decisions are made. While we are appreciative of the roles of civil society in furthering developing States' issues and agree to some extent with the Secretary-General's recommendations, we would nevertheless suggest that careful consideration be given to the extent of their involvement to ensure that the political mandates and decision-making capacities of Member States are not compromised or their status eroded.

We believe that a challenging opportunity is before us to revisit the important issues before our institution. Whilst the reform is a never-ending process, the United Nations must assure its Members that the current reform will be a milestone that will take the Organization into the twenty-first century and bring forth changes that will be acceptable to all. We certainly are mindful of the Secretary-General's remark that history will judge us harshly should we fail to do well.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system are two major interrelated issues on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly. We are confident, Sir, that, under your able and wise leadership, our collective endeavours to address those two important issues will produce a positive and fruitful outcome. To that end, a great deal of effort has been made, but much remains to be done.

Allow me not to miss this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his tireless efforts throughout the fifty-eighth session, which, among other things, led to the adoption of the two important resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We consider those resolutions to be a positive step towards reaching a common understanding on these matters of high significance. We stand ready to support and participate in that very important endeavour.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the agenda item on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. However, I would like to elaborate the position of my delegation on the following points.

The revitalization of the General Assembly, which is undoubtedly at the heart of the reform of the Organization, should be perceived as a dynamic and ongoing process. The two features of the process — enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly and improving its working methods — should be pursued simultaneously. In the process of revitalizing the United Nations, the central position of the General Assembly, as the most democratic forum of the United Nations consisting of all Member States, should be improved within the framework of the United Nations system and in line with the provisions of the Charter. Such steps will strengthen the position and enhance the effectiveness of the General Assembly.

Resolution 58/126 prescribes a number of important and useful ideas for improving the work of the General Assembly. The working relation between the Security Council and the General Assembly is given particular attention. As stipulated in the resolution, improving the quality of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly and the regular briefing of the President of the General Assembly by the President of the Security Council on the work of the Council, as well as the convening of periodic meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to ensure the increased cooperation, coordination and complementarity of the work programmes of those three organs are key elements in the process of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Moreover, the importance of the briefing of the Member States of the results of those efforts by the President of the General Assembly has been emphasized.

On the issue of the strengthening of the United Nations system, I cannot fail to extend our appreciation for the initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General. In attaching importance to the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, we believe that the Panel was entrusted with a huge and daunting responsibility and expect, accordingly, its recommendations to be based on the real and objective

forms of threats and challenges confronting the international community today. We are also of the view that those recommendations should by no means deviate from the fundamental rules and principles of this universal Organization. Obviously, the Member States will make the final judgement on the substantive and procedural aspects of those recommendations.

Equally important is the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/59/354, in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, in which the Secretary-General has suggested a number of significant recommendations that require our careful attention. We believe that sufficient time should be allocated for a thorough consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals in order to remove ambiguities that seem to have overshadowed the thrust of the report. We therefore wish to reflect on this issue in greater detail at another juncture.

In brief, we concur with the Secretary-General's view that there is considerable merit in opening the regular work of the Assembly to increased participation by accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To achieve that goal, we should not lose sight of the intergovernmental nature of this body. In our view, the accreditation of NGOs to the United Nations is one of the most important issue that needs to be carefully dealt with. The proposal of the Panel on this issue has caused considerable discomfort and concern among many Members of the Organization. The present situation may not be satisfactory, but the comments of the Panel with regard to the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations are not encouraging either. We strongly believe that the Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, is the appropriate forum to consider and approve the accreditation of non-governmental organizations. It is unfortunate that the Panel failed to make meaningful proposals to reform and streamline the work of the Committee for the improvement of the accreditation process of NGOs.

On the issue of simplifying the planning and budgetary process of the United Nations, we take note of some important measures adopted at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. However, due to certain shortcomings of the document, the Committee for Programme and Coordination was not able to recommend approval of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 and recommended that the Assembly review the plan outline at its fifty-ninth session. We believe that the plan outline should be balanced by taking into account all relevant legislative mandates, including internationally agreed development goals.

We hope that a revised strategic framework can be linked to the budget outline and a reinforced system of evaluation and monitoring. We stress that the results of that comprehensive exercise should ultimately improve accountability and contribute to effective intergovernmental participation in the process in order to ensure that the best results are achieved through the effective implementation of mandates.

Last but not least, on the reform in human resources management, taking note of the omnibus resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, we hope that the continued reform in that area can improve equitable geographical distribution and the internal justice system in the Secretariat.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, allow me to congratulate you, first of all, on your election to preside over the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. With your able guidance, this session will certainly produce many fruitful results.

Today, my delegation is pleased to address the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly. In that regard, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his initiative in strengthening the Organization and also to congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte on his leadership throughout the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, as well as his efforts to place emphasis on the revitalization of the United Nations, which have provided the impetus for today's deliberations.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Thailand wishes to associate itself with the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of NAM.

My delegation believes that the General Assembly should and could play a constructive role in resolving international problems, as well as some non-traditional security issues. It is on that premise that my delegation therefore supports the long-standing and ongoing process of revitalizing the General Assembly. That is because the new challenges of the present time

require a mechanism that is able to withstand and overcome such challenges, many of which are unprecedented and were unanticipated when the Charter was adopted in 1945. Such a mechanism must be able to function efficiently and effectively and be relevant to the challenges it currently faces.

The revitalized General Assembly should, first of all, strengthen its role in solving problems related to international political, economic and social issues through increased synergy and coherence among the relevant bodies of the United Nations, namely the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Secondly, the role of the General Assembly should not be overshadowed by that of the Security Council, as the matters taken up in the General Assembly are not limited to States' security. Therefore, in addressing non-traditional security issues, the General Assembly needs the full participation of Member States in the decision-making and implementation processes.

Over the past 12 years, 94 General Assembly resolutions regarding the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly have been adopted, but fewer than half have been implemented. The true commitment of Member States is urgently required to ensure the full implementation of our work towards a better future for this global Organization. My delegation wishes to see the full implementation of the two important resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which reflect the merits of another step towards the revitalization of the Assembly.

My delegation is pleased to see that the working methods of the General Assembly and the Main Committees are undergoing improvements. The voting procedure of the First Committee, for instance, serves as a good example of how the United Nations can be streamlined. Moreover, The Main Committees should be allowed to review their resolutions in order to choose those on which they wish to negotiate. That approach would be less time-consuming and enable the Member States to focus on the resolutions that really need attentive negotiations. For the resolutions that merely require updates, a list can be made to identify them and to provide details of their new information.

My delegation sees the merit of revitalizing the working methods of the General Assembly by clustering issues for discussion in Main Committees, a practice that has been introduced in various Main Committees. That approach would allow the Main Committees to consider, simultaneously and in a less time-consuming fashion, issues that are closely related.

In considering issues and resolutions to be discussed in the Main Committees, my delegation wishes to reiterate that documents to be used for discussion should be circulated well in advance of the debate. Such early circulation will enhance the discussion, as Member States will have more time to examine the issue as well as to discuss them with their capitals.

Another point worth considering is the mechanism for following up the resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly. My delegation is of the view that the sponsors and co-sponsors of resolutions should also play a constructive role in following up any progress made before submitting a draft resolution on the same issue to the General Assembly at its next session. Such responsibility is meant to ensure not only the ownership of resolutions, but also their full implementation. Thailand is also of the view that a review mechanism should be put in place to help the Assembly periodically to evaluate if the process of revitalization has been carried out in its entirety and to reflect views and comments made by Member States. Such a mechanism could be in the form of a consultative group of interested Member States.

Having said that, it must not be forgotten that the primary purposes of the United Nations are to promote peace and security, as well as to promote a development agenda. The States Members of the United Nations should move forward together and face the challenges in unity and in a non-confrontational manner. With those purposes in mind, the revitalization of the General Assembly should also be carried out with the objective of enhancing those purposes.

With regard to the issue of strengthening the United Nations system, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for establishing the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, under the chairmanship of the former President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, with a view to reviewing the existing practices concerning the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. In that regard, my delegation would like to

commend the Cardoso report for providing a valuable contribution through a number of recommendations for enhancing the reform of the United Nations, as well as the report of the Secretary-General in response to the Cardoso report, which also comes up with a number of important suggestions.

Having studied the report with great interest, my delegation welcomes the recommendation of the Panel that the United Nations should become a more outward-looking Organization. My delegation believes, in principle, that non-governmental organizations and civil society could have more important roles to play on various issues in the framework of the United Nations and in today's society. Their inputs, expertise and active participation have indeed proved to be essential in many areas. That issue deserves further deliberation and extensive study to identify the most appropriate roles and their engagement in the linkages with the United Nations.

My delegation also supports the efforts of the United Nations to connect the global with the local. My delegation believes that the fulfilment of a global agenda, such as the Millennium Development Goals, cannot be achieved by Governments alone. The participation of the public sector at all levels, including the non-governmental level, is also a key to success, since the involvement of that sector, as a stakeholder, will be an important indicator of whether or not the Goals are being fulfilled.

In conclusion, my delegation pledges its full support for the efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations and revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, and assures the Secretary-General and you, Sir, of its continued and active participation in the process.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): During these last months, both public opinion and Member States have rightly focused on the structure of the bodies of the United Nations. Implicit in such a discussion has always been the question of whether the Organization's structure and functioning are adequate to the Charter's goals and about the means we can count on to implement them. It is precisely that meaning that we attach to the ongoing discussion on effective multilateralism: the capacity to fulfil the tasks set out in the Charter, some of which have been highlighted in the Millennium Development Goals.

Characterized by its universal membership, this Organization must be adapted to equally universal goals. We know from experience that the shape of political life and the influence exercised by public authority are not always up to the task of promoting the common good. Today, the universal common good is confronted with problems of worldwide dimensions — problems, therefore, that can be solved only by an authority possessed with power, organization and means coextensive with those problems and whose sphere of activity is worldwide. Thus, the bodies of the international community should be shaped so that they are capable of realizing the common good by ways and means adequate to changing historical conditions.

Up to now, the debate has laid emphasis on a wealth of reasons, motivations and valuable reflections about the institutional engineering of the United Nations. In that respect, perhaps the main point we wish to restate is that structures must reflect functions. As for the reform of the bodies, my delegation would like to suggest some terms of reference.

Strengthening the United Nations system implies the acknowledgement that it is a system founded on cooperation among States, rather than on competition, and actively nourished by constructive will, trust, the keeping of commitments and collaboration among equal and reciprocally responsible partners. Making those founding principles irreversible is a primary task.

The bottom line is the recognition of the principle that all States are by nature equal in dignity. We know very well in this institution that, even though nations may differ widely in material progress and military strength, they are all conscious of their juridical equality. It is true, however, that the nations that have attained a superior degree of scientific, cultural and economic development have the responsibility to make a greater contribution to the common cause.

On a more practical note, several essential criteria should be taken into account for reshaping the structures and revisiting the procedures of this Organization: representation and inclusiveness for the structures; impartiality, efficiency and efficacy for the procedures; and accountability and responsiveness for the outcomes.

The legitimacy of the decisions taken in the United Nations, including the Security Council, ultimately derives — as for any political body — from two pillars: the degree and scope of representation; and the process of decision-making. Decision-making will therefore tend, in general, towards greater consensus of opinion in deliberations.

It is clear that, for practical reasons, not all of the bodies of the United Nations can be arranged on the model of the General Assembly. This does not mean, however, that the set of principles and criteria to which I just referred are not applicable to the Security Council — quite the opposite: in restructuring this body, one might consider that its composition should reflect, as far as possible the world population, geopolitical regions, various levels of economic development and different civilizations. That list may not be complete, but it includes criteria that are essential in order to improve the credibility and efficacy of a reformed Security Council. Finally, it is important to consider the actual capacity and political will to contribute substantially to reach the goals that constitute a priority for the overall majority of the Member States.

At the same time, as the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations recommended in its report to the Secretary-General, the United Nations needs to become a more outward-looking Organization, capable of listening more carefully to the needs and demands of the global community.

In this context, we are reminded of the recommendation of that Panel to connect the global with the local. That criterion can be read as a modern version of the well-known notion of subsidiarity, which was a further landmark in the process of reform. In fact, because of their gravity, breadth and urgency, most problems in today's world are often simply too difficult for the rulers of individual States to solve with any degree of success. At the same time, we must make it clear that the essential purpose of the United Nations is to create world conditions in which the public authorities of each nation, its citizens and intermediate groups, can carry out their tasks, fulfil their duties and claim their rights in greater security.

It is our hope that the reform of this institution will not only help us to realize our common goals, but invest the United Nations with the necessary authority, in terms of credibility and moral legitimacy, to act for the good of the global community. That is surely the primary reason for the existence of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Johnsson (Inter-Parliamentary Union): I regret to say that the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Senator Sergio Páez Verdugo, had to be in Chile today for an important vote in parliament. I am therefore delivering his statement on behalf of the IPU.

> "I would like to refer to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on relations between the United Nations and civil society, including parliamentarians and the private sector.
>
> "Perhaps I might begin by stating the obvious: parliaments are entirely different from civil society and do not belong in that category. I believe that the need for a wholly distinct approach to parliaments was also recognized by the Panel members after they began their work, in particular when they resorted to the more traditional term of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as it appears in Article 71 of the Charter, thereby clearly excluding parliaments.
>
> "That being said, I nonetheless welcome the scope and the vision of the Cardoso report. We believe that it is right in drawing attention to the need for the United Nations to consolidate and expand its working relationship with the international parliamentary community. There are three reasons for this, on which I will elaborate in the course of these remarks. The first is that the democracy deficit currently facing the United Nations has to be resolved. The second is the need to mobilize better awareness and more active support by national parliaments for the work of the United Nations. Finally, we believe that it is imperative that the voice of the people, expressed through their elected representatives, be heard more clearly in this important body.

"That is an idea that we in the IPU have been advocating for many years, and we have deployed significant efforts with a view to its realization, both within the Organization and in our respective national parliaments. Indeed, that is at the very heart of our mandate. The IPU marshals substantive parliamentary support for international action, and, as the world organization of parliaments, the IPU is the only global institution that can mobilize parliamentary action worldwide. We do so by being in constant contact with all parliaments.

"Four years ago, the Millennium Declaration recognized the need to strengthen further the cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations and recommended that that be done through the IPU. That was a result of the first Conference of Speakers of Parliaments convened by the IPU, which had taken place here in New York just a few days earlier. During that Conference speakers had pledged their commitment and support to the United Nations, particularly for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and voiced their determination to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of international cooperation, with the United Nations at its core.

"In making that recommendation in the Millennium Declaration, the heads of State or Government recognized the role that the IPU can play. Moreover, they did not seek to change the nature of the United Nations, which is, and will remain, an intergovernmental organization, and they recognized that parliamentary action in relation to international cooperation must first and foremost take place at the national level.

"Turning once again to the Cardoso Panel, the report is a cause of concern to parliaments and their international organization — the IPU — because it suggests that the United Nations, an intergovernmental institution, should create its own inter-parliamentary structures. That would obviously result in duplication of the work currently undertaken by the IPU. But, more important, it would run contrary to the principle of separation of powers between the legislative and the executive branch of government. To put it simply, the IPU strongly believes that it is wholly inappropriate for the United Nations to consider organizing the work of members of parliament. If the goal is, indeed, to bridge the democratic deficit and bring the voice of the people closer to the United Nations, then it is also important that we get this right.

"For all of those reasons, parliamentary leaders have taken it upon themselves to consult widely in their capitals and within their parliaments on how best to bring forward the substantive recommendations of the Cardoso Panel. In practical terms, they intend to channel these consultations through the preparatory mechanism for the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, which they hope to convene here at United Nations Headquarters in early September next year, before the opening of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. They will thus be in a position to deliver to the Assembly the conclusions of their consultations in the second half of next year.

"The Second World Conference of Speakers will focus on multilateralism and the role of the United Nations. It will address issues like cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations, but it will also make a progress report on parliamentary contributions to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, it will seek to develop a reference framework on parliamentary democracy. As always, we are working closely with the Secretariat to make this a successful joint event.

"We have carefully examined the report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Cardoso Panel's recommendations, and we look forward to working closely with him and with the United Nations, with a view to shaping effective mechanisms for stronger interaction between parliaments and the United Nations.

"The 111th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union just completed its proceedings in Geneva last week. On that occasion, we met with the Executive Director of UNAIDS, with whom we have developed a close working relationship over the years, aimed at building a global focus for the work of parliamentarians on AIDS. Together, we have formulated and implemented a series of sound projects, including the publication of a Guide for

Parliamentarians that focuses exclusively on developing adequate legislation in the fight against HIV/AIDS, good practices and recommended policies. New projects are in the making for the future, including setting up a special select parliamentary committee on HIV/AIDS at the global level.

"Looking towards the high-level meetings coming in 2005 and 2006, we have agreed, together with Dr. Peter Piot, to devote particular attention to the question of the role and responsibility of parliaments in the fight against HIV/AIDS on the occasion of the forthcoming IPU Assembly, which will take place in Manila in April next year. The ensuing results, conclusions and recommendations will then be fed into the United Nations intergovernmental process, and certainly will be brought to your attention here in the United Nations General Assembly.

"In conclusion, Sir, please allow me to thank you for your country's leadership, not just here in the United Nations, but also within the Inter-Parliamentary Union, where Gabon has been an active and valued member for many years. The Speaker of the Parliament of Gabon will be travelling to New York in just two weeks' time to participate in our annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations. We ourselves will then be travelling to Libreville in May 2005 for the third and final preparatory meeting of the Parliamentary Summit next year. As always, we know we will be able to count on your country's full support."

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these agenda items.

With that last statement, we have, therefore, concluded this joint debate on agenda item 52 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, and agenda item 54 on the strengthening of the United Nations system. These items, as the Assembly is aware, are by no means new. They have been on our agenda for several years now. We have already devoted a dozen resolutions to them, including resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 of the fifty-eighth session, which have been referred to by all of the speakers.

The report of the Secretary-General on civil society, which was introduced by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, put forward specific proposals that require our careful consideration.

From these declarations, we note the following critical points regarding revitalization. The statements were part of the continuation of the general debate, during which delegations had specifically brought up this issue. In addition to a general reference to the importance of the role of the General Assembly and its central nature in the global context of the reform of the United Nations, two specific aspects emerged from the debate – namely, the implementation of resolutions already adopted and the continuation of consideration of outstanding questions.

Regarding the implementation of resolutions, all the delegations asked for the implementation of the provisions of resolution 58/126 and 58/316 to be actively continued. The meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council were rigorously supported.

On the same subject, I would like to recall at this time, as I had already emphasized at the end of the general debate, that the three Presidents had a meeting on 30 September. Other meetings are already planned.

The outstanding questions deal, above all, with rationalization of the agenda and a reduction of documentation. Delegations requested that additional efforts be made to rationalize the agenda of the plenary and of the Main Committees, an agenda where the categories coincide with the priorities laid down by the Organization in its medium-term plan. In this respect, emphasis was placed on the central role that must be played by the Bureau. It was also stressed that the organization of the agenda should first be the subject of an evaluation by the plenary at the sixty-first session. Several delegations said that there was a need to see that this organization of the agenda did not impact on the Assembly's capacity to carry out its work. Delegations also emphasized that the rationalization of the agenda should be accompanied by a reduction in the volume of documentation and the number of resolutions. It was, however, emphasized that such a reduction should not negatively impact the information needed by Member States for consideration of various items.

Beyond revitalization of the work of the Assembly, the debate also underscored the need for strengthening of the Economic and Social Council,

reform of the Security Council and enhancement of the role of the United Nations in general.

Regarding relations between the United Nations and civil society contained in the Cardoso report, it was recognized that the contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are important for the work of the United Nations. However, it is clear from discussions that the modalities for their participation and their contribution to the work of the General Assembly still need to be considered.

Several delegations advocated a simplification of the system of accreditation for representatives of civil society.

A large number of delegations welcomed the existing cooperation on the local level between Governments and civil society on development issues. The hope was expressed that this cooperation would also be strengthened with the United Nations. However, several delegations advocated limiting such cooperation to the level of the Economic and Social Council. Moreover, numerous delegations supported the suggestion for the creation of a special fund, which was put forward by the Secretary-General, to strengthen the participation of NGOs from developing countries.

At the end of this debate, I now propose, with the Bureau, to commence the broadest possible consultations with Member States to continue the revitalization process, aimed at strengthening the role and the authority of the General Assembly.

I will keep the Assembly informed regarding the timetable and the steps I shall be taking in this respect.

The General Assembly has thus concluded the present stage of consideration of agenda items 52 and 54.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.